

ERIC'SgardenJOURNAL

BY ERIC STINSON
WITH PHOTOS BY KIM KAUFEMAN

ERIC P. STINSON

Hey there! Interesting things from this season.

Telly's nursery in Troy continues to have the most interesting, largest, up to date and high quality collection of annuals in this area. Unless you must have something very hard to get (that doesn't mean that it is rare) as in the 3rd or 4th named cultivar of *Salvia* 'Van Hout II', my guess is that they've got it. For me (at this point in my career), that means Telly's can be one stop shopping. That's easier, and that is good. But then there is a blazing red late *Salvia* (which name I don't recall) that is quite wonderful that came from the plant sale at MSU. Every now and again you'll happen to come across something that rings your bell. I volunteer out there. Make sure to keep an eye peeled as the plants are being moved out of their growing houses. First come first served, don't you know?

I have one last point about annuals. I bought a wonderful dwarf single marigold somewhere that is self-cleaning. Flowers fall apart on their own; there's no grooming involved. Not often specified on the tag as such, but when you run into a plant like this, tell your friends and pass on the seed. Seems true that plants with single flowers, in general, are more likely to be self-cleaning. That is certainly true with a marigold. This plant in particular, grows new leaves quickly over develop-



Asarum canadense

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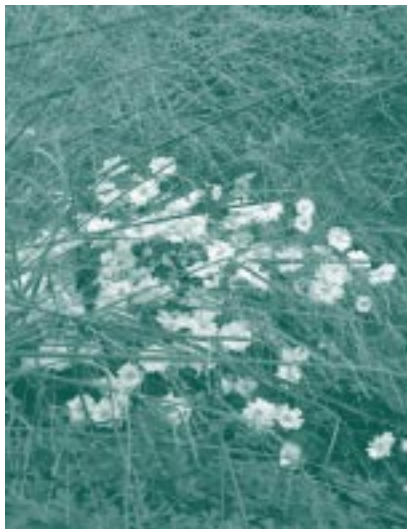
ing seed heads, not so with many cultivars. I guess that this plant is good enough that I'll save seed. Anyone interested can show up on a workday and claim some. Hint, hint! Fall workday, this season, will include digging, dividing and potting divisions of every day lily in the place. An ample number of

divisions will be available gratis for everyone involved. There will be lots of plants and some exceptional kinds available. I want to use day lilies, hence forth only in mixed plantings, as in faux meadows. There's no more obvious Foliage and no more up front focal point status. As with iris, they can mold on their own.

Wildtype Nursery, in Mason, is an exclusively native plant nursery that sells only seed propagated plants. For the most part, people who work at Wildtype collect the seed in southern lower Michigan. I'm fairly sure a nursery with this mission, and of this quality is a rare thing; even in regions with many more people than we have here. Please take advantage of their retail days, which are limited, at: www.msu.edu/~wildlife/. If you care to type all of that, it will get you there. With no kidding and no overstating involved, Wildtype is a real local treasure.

I'm trying to use as many native plants in the garden as funds allow. The design possibilities are wonderful. They are part of our natural heritage. Sooner or later there will be a ginger, mayapple or columbine that is variegated. Maybe that will make them more desirable. Heaven forbid. By the way, I am writing this at the Platt Lake campground. Here is a cool plant that I've seen in the last four days: *Panicum* (switchgrass), in bloom. Some have a fair amount of red in the foliage and some are

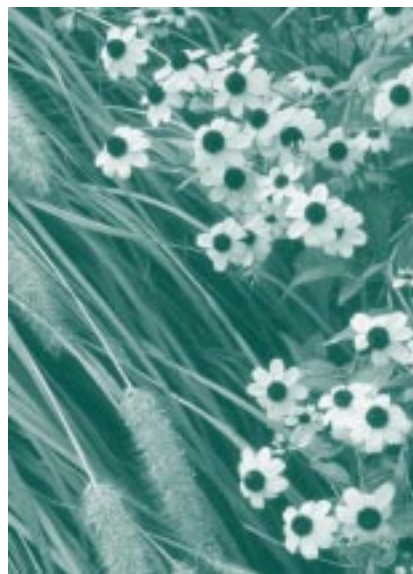
pretty darn blue. 'Prairie Sky' is the newest, very blue cultivar. Bluebird Nursery would be a good place to look for Panicum varieties. Located in Nebraska, dry and cold, they market in that direction. It's very dry in this environment with dunes, dry woods, meadows. There's lots of panicum, butterfly weed, small flowered black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*), Meadow Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa*) and little bluestem. As you'd think, some are ok with very blue stems and foliage!! A common name that is most accurately descriptive can't miss it. Switch grass on the other hand...



Panicum and Japanese Anemone

The garden at the MRI building on campus was something to see on August 1. The gardener is working very hard with a delicate hand. I was touched. This is another local treasure; see for yourself.

The Beal Botanical Garden is looking very good, as befits its stature, in spite of staff losses. Staff losses at a garden of this stature are unbecoming in a community as rich as ours. If we can afford \$50,000



Rudbeckia triloba and grasses

SUV's, we can afford to maintain the Beal, stock market bubble or not. I'm remembering my parents and grandparents, how hard they worked and how proud they were of the institutions they created. Enough said.

Finally, there is the calm and richness in the garden these days. I'm appreciating views without a lot of busy perennials and thinking about shrubs, structure and massed perennials. A little quiet please! The bindweed here is easier to control than shrubs. Stepping through and around them, you can be less careful than with perennials. Massed grasses are easy too. No dead-heading, not much wilt and leaf burn in drought. It's really a better deal for maintenance all around. The American Horticultural Society produced two volumes (I think) on shrubs in their "Plants That Merit Attention" series. Nice photographs. It's a good, solid reference book.

Anyway, enjoy the fall, and whatever follows.